



**Intelligence and Terrorism
Information Center**

News of Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

June 2-9, 2009

The vision...

...vs. the reality



Left: American President Barack Obama in Egypt (Egyptian TV, June 4, 2009). Right: One of the booby-trapped horses which blew up in the attempted terrorist attack at the Nahal Oz fuel terminal (Al-Jazeera TV, June 8, 2009).

Overview

- Terrorist events this past week focused on the prevention of a multifaceted showcase attack near the Nahal Oz fuel terminal, carried out by a network affiliated with the global jihad. Five terrorist operatives were killed and others were wounded. Since Operation Cast Lead, it was the first attack of its kind carried out by a “renegade” terrorist organization operating in opposition to Hamas’s policy of restraint. Hamas has refrained from attacking the western Negev, and this week as well no rockets or mortar shells were fired.
- On the political front, American President Barack Obama delivered a speech in Cairo carrying a strong message of conciliation for the Arab-Muslim world. Relating to the Palestinian-Israel conflict, he called for the implementation of the road map and emphasized his personal commitment to promoting peace based on the two-state solution. The Israeli government expressed its hope that the speech would lead to a new era of reconciliation between Israel and the Arab-Muslim world. The Palestinian Authority praised the speech and sent the ball into the Israeli court, while Hamas responded in a conciliatory tone and called for the United States to translate the speech into action.

Important Events

The Gaza Strip

Terrorist attack attempted by a network affiliated with the global jihad near the Nahal Oz fuel terminal prevented

- At 0600 hours on June 8 an IDF force operating near the Nahal Oz fuel terminal in the northern Gaza Strip spotted a number of terrorist operatives placing IEDs along the border security fence. With backup from the air, the force attacked the terrorists. During the exchange of fire, **five terrorists were apparently killed** and others were wounded. There were no Israeli casualties.



The site of the attempted attack.



One of the trucks used by the terrorist squad (Al-Jazeera TV, June 8, 2009).

- An examination of the attack showed that the 8-10 man terrorist squad arrived at the scene **in three trucks, which also carried three horses booby-trapped with IEDs and explosives**. Some of the members of the squad were also wearing **explosive belts**. After an exchange of fire the remaining terrorists retreated to the trucks waiting nearby. Apparently their intention had been to carry out a **multifaceted showcase attack**, the first of its kind since Operation Cast Lead, including the detonation of bombs, personal attacks and possibly the infiltration of Israeli territory and abductions.
- Responsibility for the attack was claimed by an organization calling itself Jund Ansarallah, which announced its establishment in the Gaza Strip in November 2008, saying it was **ideologically affiliated with the global jihad**. According to the announcement claiming responsibility posted on the group's website, the attack was called "the attack of the message,"¹ and three members of the squad were killed after they succeeded in causing the IDF heavy losses (www.janah.ps website, June 8, 2009).

¹ In Islam, the prophet Muhammad is called "Allah's messenger," clearly giving the claim of responsibility Islamic significance.



The Jund Ansarallah website.



Claiming responsibility via the Internet.



The global jihad cavalry in training (possibly preparing for the terrorist attack) (Jund Ansarallah website, June 8, 2009).

■ A surfer on the Hamas Internet forum wrote that the network was supported by Hamas and its operatives had trained at Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades training installations. The surfer also wrote that Hamas has provided the network with vehicles and weapons (Hamas's PALDF forum, June 9, 2009). In general, Hamas spokesmen did not relate to the attempted attack with the exception of Ismail Haniya, head of the Hamas de-facto administration, who called the event Israeli aggression in the Gaza Strip. However, he added that the incident proved that there were elements which did not respect "the Palestinian leaning toward the mutual lull in the fighting" (Ma'an News Agency, June 8, 2009). In our assessment his message was a delicate way of saying that Hamas was not in favor of the attack.

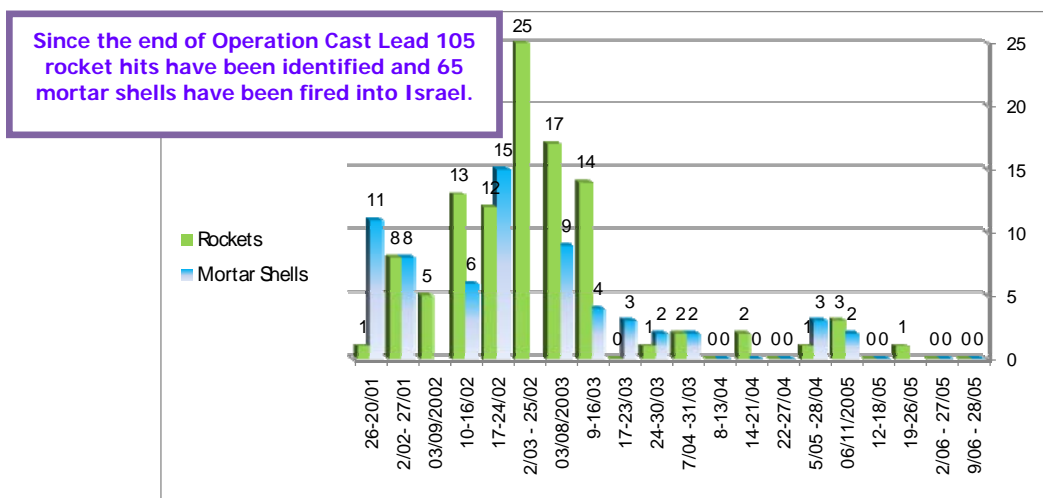
■ To summarize, the attempted showcase attack was to be the first of its kind since Operation Cast Lead, carried out by a "renegade" terrorist organization affiliated with the global jihad, one of the networks operating in the Gaza Strip **in opposition to Hamas's policy of restraint**. The previous attack carried out at the Nahal Oz fuel terminal on April 9, 2008, involved a squad of four

armed terrorists who broke through the border security fence and fired at Israeli civilians working in the area, killing two of them.²

Rocket and mortar shell fire

■ During the past week no rocket or mortar shell hits were identified in Israeli territory. The relative calm in the western Negev has continued for three months.

Rocket and mortar shell fire since the end of Operation Cast Lead



Israel security forces apprehend two wanted Hamas operatives in the Hebron district

■ On June 1 a joint IDF-Israel Security Agency action apprehended two wanted Hamas operatives in a village southwest of Hebron. The two were involved in a shooting attack south of Hebron a month ago. Searches of the operatives' homes conducted by the IDF revealed an Uzi submachine gun and a Kalashnikov assault rifle used in the attack (IDF Spokesman's website, June 9, 2009).

The IDF eases Palestinian movement through Judea and Samaria

■ During the past week the IDF took steps to ease the movement of Palestinians along the roads in Judea and Samaria. During the past year 140 roadblocks and checkpoints have

² For further information see our April 10, 2008 bulletin "[Two Israeli civilians were killed in a terrorist attack at the fuel terminal of Nahal Oz, the only source of fuel supply for Gaza Strip residents.](#)"

been dismantled to facilitate daily life for the Palestinians in Judea and Samaria (IDF Spokesman's website, June 5, 2009).

■ **On June 3** the following measures were implemented:

- **The Rimonim checkpoint** was dismantled, making free passage possible between Ramallah, Nablus and northern Samaria.
- **The Bir Zeit checkpoint** was dismantled, making free passage possible between Ramallah, Jericho and the Jordan Valley.
- **The Asira al-Shamalia checkpoint** will be open 24/7 to ease travel from Nablus to northern Samaria.

■ **On June 5** two roadblocks were opened east of Qalqiliya to enable Palestinians to travel freely to the villages east of the city.

■ **On June 6** the IDF began the operation of the Hawara checkpoint south of Nablus, and an additional one northwest of Nablus, keeping them open 24/7, easing the travel of Palestinians living in the Nablus district (IDF Spokesman's website, June 6, 2009).

The Gaza Strip after Operation Cast Lead

"Free Gaza" announces dates for ships sailing to the Gaza Strip

■ With the slogan "Summer of freedom," Free Gaza announced that ships were to set sail for the Gaza Strip during the coming three months on June 25, July 14 and August 22. The organization intends to send assistance to the Gaza Strip, including cement (Free Gaza website, June 7).

The tunnel industry

■ Egypt continues its activities against smuggling to the Gaza Strip. On June 6 the Egyptian security forces uncovered 12 tunnels in the region of east Rafah. One of them was discovered after a ventilation opening was found near the entrance of the Rafah city hall (*Al-Sharq Al-Awsat*, June 6, 2009). On June 8 the Egyptians uncovered eight tunnels near the Gaza Strip border. Large quantities of merchandise were found near the tunnels, meant for smuggling into the Gaza Strip (Reuters, June 8, 2009).

The UN delegation examining the events of Operation Cast Lead ends its visit to the Gaza Strip

■ The UN Human Rights Council investigation team left the Gaza Strip through the Rafah crossing on June 5. The team traveled throughout the Gaza Strip and met with senior Hamas figures, including Ismail Haniya (Ma'an News Agency, June 5, 2009).

The Political Front

The Palestinian-Israeli conflict and President Obama's speech in Cairo



American President Barack Obama and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak (Egyptian TV, June 4, 2009).

■ On June 4 American President Barack Obama delivered a conciliatory speech in Cairo, aimed at the Arab-Muslim world and described as "historic." He used Arabic terminology and quoted from the Qur'an with the intention of redefining the image of the United States and the interaction between America and the Muslim world. He focused mainly on issues in dispute between the United States and the Arab-Muslim world, whose solution he regarded as a joint challenge. Prominent among the issues he raised was the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

■ Obama mentioned the suffering and injustice suffered by both sides in the conflict. He stressed Jewish suffering throughout history, including the Holocaust. However, he also said that the Palestinians had experienced suffering resulting from the "occupation" and stressed their "legitimate aspiration...for a state." He said that both sides know what they have to follow the road map: The Palestinians had to abandon violence and Hamas had to accept the conditions of the International Quartet. He called on Israel to stop construction in the settlements, saying that it was violated former agreements and undermined efforts to achieve peace. He said that the Arab peace initiative was only the beginning, and appealed to them to support the Palestinian Authority and

help the Palestinian people recognize Israel's legitimacy. He also stressed America's commitment to furthering peace on the basis of the two-state solution.³

Israel's response

■ **The Israeli Prime Minister's office** issued an official response to the speech expressing the Israeli government's hope that it would indeed lead to a new period of reconciliation between the Arab-Muslim world and Israel, and that it heralded a new era which would end the conflict and lead to Arab recognition of Israel as the homeland of the Jewish people, living in peace and security in the Middle East. Israel, said the announcement, was committed to peace and would make every effort to expand the circle of peace while protecting its interests, especially its national security.

■ **Defense Minister Ehud Barak** praised the speech and expressed his hope that the Arab world would adopt it and end terrorism. He said it was a significant, brave direct appeal in which Obama had formulated his vision and the universal values he wanted to share with the Muslim world. He added that the speech encouraged and strengthened peace-loving moderate elements, and also challenged terrorism and the extremist elements threatening the peace and stability of the Middle East. He also stressed Israel's commitment to furthering negotiations with the Palestinians based on previous agreements and commitments.

The Palestinian Authority's response

■ Figures in the Palestinian Authority praised the speech, calling it "historic." Their initial responses were the following:⁴

- **Saeb Erekat**, head of the PLO negotiating team, said that the speech would go down in history as the first Western attempt to approach the Arab-Muslim world (Al-Arabia TV, June 4, 2009). In a different interview he said that now, after Obama's speech, "the ball was in the Israeli court." He said that Palestinian suffering did not bother Obama's conscience, and that his views had to be translated into a peace process. He added that that if building in the settlements were not frozen, Obama would have "a big problem" (*Al-Halij*, June 6, 2009).

³ For the full text of the speech, see <http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5gkyWk2MK7xeDw2b1jPhFS6KsvPegD98N67R80>.

⁴ For further information see our upcoming bulletin "Initial Arab-Muslim responses to President Obama's speech in Cairo from Iran and Hezbollah, Syria, the Palestinian arena and the global jihad."



Saeb Erekat (Egyptian TV, June 4, 2009).

- **Nabil Abu Rudeina**, presidential spokesman, said that the speech was sincere and reflected a genuine beginning that could be relied on (Agence France Presse, June 4, 2009).
- **Yasser Abd Rabbo**, secretary of the PLO's executive committee, said that the speech represented a comprehensive strategy and that all its points were interlinked. He said that the most important point was the Palestinian issue, which was "respectably represented," indicating a change in American relations with Arab countries, Israel and the Palestinians. He added that Obama had turned the Palestinian issue into a national American interest (Palestinian Television, June 4, 2009).

Hamas

■ Hamas spokesmen responded to the speech in a **conciliatory tone** but called on the United States to translate words into action, especially concerning the struggle against the settlements and lifting the "siege" of the Gaza Strip. They also noted subjects which did not appear in the speech, including recognizing the legitimacy of Hamas, which had come to power through [democratic] elections. During the speech Hamas held a propaganda display in the form of a quiet demonstration of dozens of Palestinian children standing in front of the Rafah crossing under signs reading "The message of the children of Palestine to Obama," i.e., to lift the "siege" of the Gaza Strip (*Al-Yawm Al-Sabaa*, June 4, 2009).



Children demonstrate near the Rafah crossing to lift the "siege" (Hamas's Palestine-Info website, June 7, 2009).

■ Senior Hamas figures had the following to say:

- **Musa Abu Marzuq**, deputy chairman of Hamas's political bureau, said that the main point of the speech was that the American president wanted to send a message to the Muslim world but that he did not have a response for events on the ground, especially the wars in which the United States was directly and indirectly involved. He said that Obama had in fact changed the tone of his language toward Hamas, and that he now had to act more vigorously to talk with Hamas and act against the expansion of the settlements (Al-Arabia TV, June 5, 2009).
- **Ismail Haniya**, head of the de-facto Hamas administration in the Gaza Strip, said that Obama had adopted a new rhetoric. He said it might signal the beginning of an era of reconciliation between the West and the Arab-Muslim world. However, he said, Hamas was of the opinion that policy and strategy were not limited to speeches, but had to turn into action. The Palestinians were waiting to see what would happen after the speech. Would their suffering end? Would the siege be lifted? Would the crossings be opened? Would the occupation end and the Palestinian state spoken of by Obama be established? (Al-Jazeera TV, June 5, 2009).
- **Muhammad Nizal**, a member of the Hamas political bureau, said that there was no reason to celebrate the speech but that it had to be turned into action. Most of what the president had to say was nice, he said, but had to be put into practice on the ground (BBC in Arabic, June 5, 2009).
- **Fawzi Barhoum**, Hamas spokesman, said that the speech "made people feel good," was polite, and was meant to make the United States look better in the eyes of the world. However, it also had internal contradictions, for instance when he said that Hamas had the support of the Palestinian people but said nothing about its legitimacy and its rise to power through legitimate elections (Agence France Presse, June 4, 2009).
- **Musheir al-Masri**, Hamas secretary in the Palestinian Legislative Council, expressed disappointment, saying that the speech offered nothing new and did not demonstrate a genuine readiness to change American policy regarding the Palestinian and other regional issues (Al-Alam TV, June 4, 2009).

■ Another example of Hamas exploitation of the speech for propaganda purposes was the **letter sent by Hamas Deputy Foreign Minister Ahmad Yussuf to the American president during his stay in Cairo** on June 4. Its contents were posted on the website of an American women's pacifist organization called Code Pink: Women for Peace, whose representatives had visited the Gaza Strip. It was unclear whether the letter was actually delivered to Obama. The letter stated that Hamas praised President Obama's visit to the Arab world and his initiative to bridge over disagreements with the Arab-Muslim world. It represented the **Israeli-Palestinian conflict** as one of the reasons for the continuing tension between the United States and the Arabs. In it,

Ahmad Yussuf reiterated the call to Obama and senior members of the American administration to visit the Gaza Strip, which was the victim of a brutal [sic] Israeli attack carried out with American weapons and money. He said he wanted the president to see the destruction in the Gaza Strip for himself (he used the term “ground zero,” an analogy to the Twin Towers), and also called on the United States to make a change on the ground by lifting the “siege” of the Gaza Strip and freezing building in the settlements. He ended by saying that Hamas was willing to be part of a “just solution” for the conflict with no preconditions, except that it had to be suitable to the positions of the international community, the UN, the International Court and the human rights organizations.



Obama, the link between East and West
(Jordanian daily *Al-Dustour*, June 7, 2009).

The Internal Palestinian Arena

The Palestinian Authority continues active counterterrorism measures in Qalqiliya

■ On June 4 Palestinian Authority security forces surrounded a house in Qalqiliya after receiving information that armed Hamas operatives were hiding inside. The operatives hid in the cellar with weapons and explosives. The Palestinian Authority security forces broke into the building after the operatives refused to surrender. Three Hamas operatives and one member of the Palestinian Authority's Preventive Security Services were killed (Palestinian Television, June 4, 2009).

■ **In Judea and Samaria, and especially in the Qalqiliya region, the Palestinian Authority has pursued an active policy of counterterrorism measures.** Two of the reasons are its desire to weaken Hamas and to prove its capabilities to Israel and the United States. In recent months it has made a concerted effort against Hamas in Qalqiliya, including the detentions of scores of activists and the confiscation of weapons. The previous incident in Qalqiliya occurred on May 30, when three Hamas operatives were killed, one of them a senior member of Hamas's military-terrorist wing in the city, after Palestinian Authority security forces broke into a house where the operatives were hiding.

■ This time as well Hamas severely criticized the Palestinian Authority. Hamas spokesman in the Gaza Strip, **Fawzi Barhoum**, criticized the security coordination between the Palestinian Authority's security forces and Israel, adding that Fatah's action was destroying any chance for a dialogue with Hamas (Hamas's Palestine-Info website, June 4, 2009). **Sami Abu Zuhri**, another Hamas spokesman, said that the timing of the events was linked to Barack Obama's visit to the Middle East and meant to send the message that the Palestinian Authority was fulfilling its security commitments (Hamas's Palestine-Info website, June 4, 2009). **Abu Obeida**, spokesman for Hamas's military-terrorist wing, said that Hamas placed responsibility squarely on the shoulders of Mahmoud Abbas and Salam Fayyad. He said that all the participants in the "two crimes in Qalqiliya" were considered wanted men by Hamas's military wing (Al-Aqsa TV, June 4, 2009). **On the ground**, on June 5 Hamas initiated a wave of detentions of Fatah activists in the Gaza Strip, claiming it was a "routine security action" (Ma'an News Agency, June 6, 2009). Apparently it was done in retaliation for the Palestinian Authority security force measures taken against Hamas operatives in Judea and Samaria.



Hamas procession in the Gaza Strip protesting the Palestinian Authority action in Qalqiliya (Al-Aqsa TV, June 4, 2009).

The internal Palestinian dialogue

■ On June 8 the Hamas delegation, headed by Khaled Mashaal (representing Hamas's external leadership in Damascus) and Mahmoud al-Zahar (representing Hamas in the Gaza Strip) arrived in Egypt to discuss the dialogue with Fatah (PalToday website, June 8, 2009). Musa Abu Marzuq, Mashaal's deputy, was asked if Hamas would also discuss the issue of Gilad Shalit. He answered that Hamas did not know what would be discussed, and it was Egypt that was leading the meetings. However, he said that "there are no signs that anything is getting under way with regard to Shalit so far" (Hamas's Palestine-Info website, June 8, 2009). The Fatah delegation arrived on June 5 to examine the possibility of renewing the dialogue (QudsNews website, June 5, 2009). At this point no date for renewing the dialogue has been determined.

The Lebanese Arena

Hezbollah and the pro-Iranian and pro-Syrian camp lose the Lebanese Parliament election (Initial summary)



Hassan Nasrallah concedes the election (Al-Jazeera TV, June 8, 2009).

- The Lebanese parliamentary elections held on June 7 were won by the pro-Western camp (the March 14 Alliance), beating the supporters of Iran and Syria led by Hezbollah. In general, order was maintained, although there were violent incidents in some areas (Sidon and the Al-Badawi refugee camp in the north). The elections were a milestone in the ongoing struggle between the rival camps for Lebanese identity. However, beyond that, they were also part of the broad regional struggle between the radical camp led by Iran and Syria and the pro-Western Arab countries.
- According to the unofficial results, the March 14 Alliance and independent members of Parliament affiliated with it **managed to retain a clear majority**, winning **71 seats**, as opposed to **57 seats** won by the pro-Syrian and –Iranian camp (similar to the results of the 2005 elections). To a great extent, the victory was due to the success of the March 14 Alliance among the Christians, besting Michel Aoun, a Hezbollah ally. The March 14 Alliance also succeeded in retaining its traditional sectarian power bases among the Sunnis and Druze.
- **Sa'ad Hariri**, the leader of the winning camp, Prime Minister Fuad Siniora and other March 14 Alliance figures expressed satisfaction with the elections results, but refrained from excessive expressions, merely stating that “the greatest victor is Lebanon.” They called on their supporters not to provoke their rivals lest it lead to violence. On June 8 Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah announced that his organization accepted the election results and called for all the forces involved to cooperate, although he complained of the influx of funds, ethnic incitement and foreign intervention which he claimed had been present during the elections. In the coming days the new Parliament is expected to meet to choose a (Shi'ite) chairman, and then to begin consultations to

appoint a (Sunni) prime minister and form the new government. As in the past, Hezbollah is expected to exert pressure to achieve a “blocking third” for his camp in the new government (as he achieved in the outgoing one), which will make it possible for him to veto decisions despite the fact that he lost the elections.

■ In a speech broadcast by Al-Manar TV on June 8, **Hassan Nasrallah defended Hezbollah as an armed organization**, an issue which was often raised during the election campaign and will be a cause of disagreement in the future. He claimed, falsely, that Hezbollah’s weapons were not pointed inward, to influence politics inside Lebanon (implying that they were turned outward, toward Israel). He said that Hezbollah was not an armed party or a gang, and proof of that was that the parliamentary elections were held “calmly and freely” (ignoring the fact that following the Doha agreement, Hezbollah’s achieving a “blocking third” in the previous elections was the function of its victory in violent confrontations which occurred primarily in Beirut, in which supporters of the organization clearly used their weapons for internal purposes).

■ The **significance** of Hezbollah’s loss goes **beyond** the narrow internal Lebanese context. The election results are **a blow to Iran and Syria**, which worked behind the scenes to promote the Hezbollah camp. The results are also a blow to the perception of Lebanon as a “resistance” state adopting belligerent policies toward Israel and supporting Hezbollah and the justification for its weapons. (Nabih Berri, leader of the Amal movement and a Hezbollah ally, even representing the elections a referendum for the “resistance” [i.e., supporting Hezbollah and its terrorist strategy].) However, **in practical terms Hezbollah has preserved its political strength in internal Lebanese affairs**, in that it does not rely on democratic election processes but to a great degree on its **military force, built over the years by Iran and Syria and superior to that of the other groups and parties in Lebanon**. Hezbollah’s political power is also based **on the growing demographic and political weight of the Shi’ites in the Lebanese sectarian regime**.